



# General Assembly

Thirty-first special session

**1**st plenary meeting  
Monday, 14 September 2020, 3.45 p.m.  
New York

Official Records

*Temporary President:* Mr. Muhammad-Bande . . . . . (Nigeria)

*The meeting was called to order at 3.45 p.m.*

## Item 1 of the provisional agenda

### Opening of the session by the President of the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session

**The Temporary President:** I declare open the thirty-first special session of the General Assembly.

## Item 2 of the provisional agenda

### Minute of silent prayer or meditation

**The Temporary President:** In accordance with rule 62 of the rules of procedure, I now invite representatives to stand and observe one minute of silent prayer or meditation.

*The members of the General Assembly observed a minute of silent prayer or meditation.*

## Item 6 of the provisional agenda

### Organization of the session

**The Temporary President:** Members will recall that, in its decision 74/544, of 27 March 2020, entitled “Procedure for taking decisions of the General Assembly during the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)”, the General Assembly decided that, if the silence is not broken, the decision shall be considered adopted, and the Assembly shall take note of the decision at its first plenary meeting held after the cessation of the precautionary measures as soon as the circumstances allow.

Accordingly, the Assembly will now take note of decision S-31/1, of 15 July 2020, entitled “Member States in arrears under the terms of Article 19 of the Charter of the United Nations”; decision S-31/2, of 15 July 2020, entitled “Appointment of the members of the Credentials Committee”; decision S-31/3, of 15 July 2020, entitled “Election of the President”; decision S-31/4, of 21 July 2020, entitled “Election of the Vice-Presidents”; decision S-31/5, of 21 July 2020, entitled “Election of the Chairs of the Main Committees”; and decision S-31/6, of 21 July 2020, entitled “Adoption of the agenda”.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to take note of decisions S-31/1 through S-31/6?

*It was so decided (decision S-31/7).*

**The Temporary President:** I would like to express my sincere thanks to Ambassador Samson Iteboje of Nigeria, the previous Temporary President of the special session, for ably conducting the work of the session until the election of the President of the special session.

I should like to draw the attention of delegations to a matter concerning the participation of the Holy See and the State of Palestine, in their capacities as observer States, in the work of the General Assembly. The observer of the Holy See will participate in the work of the thirty-first special session in accordance with resolution 58/314, of 1 July 2004, with no further need for a precursory explanation prior to its intervention. The observer of the State of Palestine will participate in the work of the thirty-first special session in accordance

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with resolutions 3237 (XXIX), of 22 November 1974, 43/177, of 15 December 1988, 52/250, of 7 July 1998, and 67/19, of 29 November 2012, with no further need for a precursory explanation prior to its intervention.

In accordance with resolution 65/276, of 3 May 2011, and the note by the Secretary-General contained in document A/65/856, the observer of the European Union will participate in the work of the thirty-first special session with no further need for a precursory explanation prior to its intervention.

#### **Draft decision (A/S-31/L.1)**

**The Temporary President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Azerbaijan to introduce draft decision A/S-31/L.1.

**Mr. Aliyev (Azerbaijan):** As is known, the thirty-first special session of the General Assembly, on the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, was initiated by the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, His Excellency Mr. Ilham Aliyev, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and supported by a large majority of the States Members of the United Nations.

Now, at the end of the seventy-fourth session and with the opening of the seventy-fifth session fast approaching, it is time to look at the organization of our work to ensure a smooth transition between the presidencies of the two sessions and continue the tradition of the current President of the regular session of the Assembly also presiding over the special session. I am pleased to present the draft decision contained in document A/S-31/L.1, entitled "President and other officers of the thirty-first special session".

This decision will ensure that effective at the opening of the seventy-fifth session tomorrow, 15 September 2020, the President and Vice Presidents of the General Assembly and the Chairs of the Main Committees at the thirty-first special session shall be the same as those at its seventy-fifth regular session. This decision also allows the Assembly to decide whether, upon the appointment of the members of the Credentials Committee at its seventy-fifth session, the members of the Credentials Committee at its seventy-fifth session shall also serve as those for the thirty-first special session.

I would like to particularly thank the President of the Assembly at its thirty-first special session, His Excellency Mr. Tijjani Muhammad-Bande, for his

leadership, commitment to strong multilateralism and personal engagement with Member States to address and overcome the impact of the unprecedented global coronavirus crisis on the work of the General Assembly. I would also like to thank the Temporary President, our colleague Mr. Samson Iteboje, Deputy Permanent Representative of the Permanent Mission of Nigeria to the United Nations, for guiding us at the beginning of this special session.

I would further like to thank the Vice Presidents of the Assembly, the Chairs of the Main Committees and the members of the Credentials Committee for their service to date. We welcome His Excellency Mr. Volkan Bozkir, who will soon preside over the General Assembly at its seventy-fifth session, and we look forward to working under his guidance and leadership.

In conclusion, I hope that the draft decision before us will be adopted by consensus, thereby demonstrating our solidarity and responsibility in addressing the complex and multidimensional problem of the COVID-19 pandemic, especially at a time when more than 29 million people worldwide have been infected and the death toll is approaching 1 million.

**The Temporary President:** We shall now proceed to consider draft decision A/S-31/L.1. Before giving the floor for explanations of vote, I would like to remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

I give the floor to the representative of Armenia.

**Mr. Knyazyan (Armenia):** Our reservations regarding draft decision A/S-31/L.1 have been expressed in a letter from the Permanent Representative of Armenia addressed to you, Sir, dated 31 August 2020, which I quote:

"We have reviewed the draft decision and we strongly believe that it is important to sustain focus on addressing the substantive aspects of effective response to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and its health, humanitarian, socioeconomic and other consequences, as well as identifying the added value of the special session in relation to the ongoing deliberations and those scheduled to take place later this year with effective multilateral action on COVID-19, which

has already been chosen as a central theme of the upcoming seventy-fifth session.

“We are of the view that, in the light of the current situation, the issue of the election of the President and other officers needs to be addressed following the consultations on the modalities of the session, such as the date, format, level of participation and other organizational matters, being mindful of the need to avoid any duplication of efforts or undue proliferation of procedural processes.”

**The Temporary President:** We have heard the only speaker in explanation of vote before the voting.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft decision A/S-31/L.1, entitled “President and other officers of the thirty-first special session”. A recorded vote has been requested.

*Mr. Rai (Papua New Guinea), Vice-President of the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session, took the Chair.*

*A recorded vote was taken.*

*In favour:*

Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Canada, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d’Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Israel,

Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Micronesia (Federated States of), Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, North Macedonia, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Palau, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Rwanda, Saint Lucia, San Marino, São Tomé and Príncipe, Saudi Arabia, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, South Sudan, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Trinidad and Tobago, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Tuvalu, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United States, Uruguay, Vanuatu, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia

*Against:*

None

*Abstaining:*

Armenia, Libya, Syrian Arab Republic

*Draft decision A/S-31/L.1 was adopted by 153 votes to none, with 3 abstentions (decision S-31/8).*

**The Acting Temporary President:** I would like to congratulate His Excellency Mr. Volkan Bozkir on his election as President of the thirty-first special session. I look forward to working with him to ensure a smooth transition and I wish him a successful special session of the General Assembly.

The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 6.

*The meeting rose at 4.05 p.m.*